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Pausanias and Rome's Eastern Trade

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Abstract

This article studies Pausanias' description of Chinese silk production and Chinese geography within the context of Rome's eastern trade. China was the last stop of land and sea routes connecting Rome and the Far East through Asia Minor, Egypt, Arabia, Persia and India. Although he never journeyed into the Far East, Pausanias provides vivid descriptions of these regions, their products and inhabitants, and the people involved in trade there. The article examines the sources he might have used to construct narratives about the Far East, China and Chinese silk and where such sources might have been made available to him.

Keywords

Pausanias – Rome – Asia Minor – Egypt – Arabia – India – China

1 Pausanias and Sino-Roman Relations

Pausanias (120-180 CE), a native of Magnesia ad Sipylum (Lydia) and author of the *Description of Greece*¹ traveled extensively through Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt and Italy.² Pausanias lived in a time when the Romans not only

1 Habicht 1985, 8-9; 13-25; Bowie 2001, 24-25; Pretzler 2007, 21-23.

2 Eastern countries: 4.35.9-11, 5.7.4, 8.16.5, 33.3 (Syria), 1.42.3, 9.16.1, 36.5 (Egypt/Siwa). Rome: 5.12.6, 6.9.3, 8.17.4, 8.46.4-5. Italy: 4.35.12, 5.12.3, 8.7.3 (Campania), 2.27.4, 4.35.10 (Lazio). On sophists and their trips, see Bowersock 1969, 43-58; Anderson 1993, 27-29.

guaranteed peace around the Mediterranean Sea, but also encouraged trade and diplomatic contacts with people living beyond their borders.³ Pausanias mentions travelers venturing as far west as Gades⁴ and the Atlantic Ocean,⁵ and as far east as India;⁶ but China remains one of the most exotic countries he mentions. At the end of book 6, Pausanias compares the Greek flax produced in Elis to Chinese silk, while discussing the Far Eastern environment in which such a luxurious commodity was produced. He seemingly combines in his excursus a general assumed tradition about China (γινώσκεται...λέγεται) with new information from oral sources (ἤκουσα δὲ καὶ ὥς...οἱ δὲ...φασὶν...):

οἱ μίτοι δέ, ἀφ' ὧν τὰς ἐσθήτας ποιοῦσιν οἱ Σῆρες, ἀπὸ οὐδενὸς φλοιοῦ, τρόπον δὲ ἕτερον γίνονται τοιόνδε. ἔστιν ἐν τῇ γῇ ζωύφιόν σφισιν, δν σῆρα καλοῦσιν Ἑλλήνες, ὑπὸ δὲ αὐτῶν Σηρῶν ἄλλο πού τι καὶ οὐ σῆρ ὀνομάζεται· μέγεθος μὲν ἔστιν αὐτοῦ διπλάσιον ἢ κανθάρων ὁ μέγιστος, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα εἴκασται τοῖς ἀράχαις, οἱ ὑπὸ τοῖς δένδρεσιν ὑφαίνουσι, καὶ δὴ καὶ πόδας ἀριθμὸν ὀκτώ κατὰ ταῦτά ἔχει τοῖς ἀράχαις. ταῦτα τὰ ζῶα τρέφουσιν οἱ Σῆρες οἴκους κατασκευασάμενοι χειμῶνός τε καὶ θέρους ὥρᾳ ἐπιτηδεύουσιν· τὸ δὲ ἔργον τῶν ζῶων κλῶσμα εὐρίσκεται λεπτὸν τοῖς ποσὶν αὐτῶν περιειλιγμένον. τρέφουσι δὲ αὐτὰ ἐπὶ μὲν τέσσαρα ἔτη παρέχοντες τροφήν σφισιν ἔλυμον, πέμπτῳ δὲ—οὐ γὰρ πρόσω βιωσόμενα ἴσασιν—κάλαμον διδόασιν ἐσθίειν χλωρόν· ἡ δὲ ἔστιν ἡδίστη τροφή πασῶν τῶ ζῶω, καὶ ἐμφορηθὲν τοῦ καλάμου ῥήγνυται τε ὑπὸ πλησμονῆς καὶ ἀποθανόντος οὕτω τὸ πολὺ τῆς ἀρπεδόνης εὐρίσκουσιν ἔνδον. γινώσκεται δὲ ἡ Σηρία νῆσος ἐν μυχῶ θαλάσσης κειμένη τῆς Ἐρυθρᾶς. ἤκουσα δὲ καὶ ὥς οὐχ ἡ Ἐρυθρά, ποταμός δὲ δν Σῆρα ὀνομάζουσιν, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ποιῶν νήσον αὐτήν, ὥσπερ καὶ Αἰγύπτου τὸ Δέλτα ὑπὸ τοῦ Νείλου καὶ οὐχ ὑπὸ μίᾳς περιέχεσθαι θαλάσσης· τοιαύτην ἑτέραν καὶ τὴν Σηρίαν νήσον εἶναι. οὗτοι μὲν δὴ τοῦ Αἰθιοπίων γένους αὐτοὶ τέ εἰσιν οἱ Σῆρες καὶ ὅσοι τὰς προσεχεῖς αὐτῇ νέμονται νήσους, Ἀβασσαν καὶ Σακαίαν· οἱ δὲ αὐτοὺς οὐκ Αἰθίοπας, Σκύθας δὲ ἀναμειγμένους Ἰνδοῖς φασὶν εἶναι. Ταῦτα μὲν δὴ οὕτω λέγεται. (6.26.6-10)

The threads from which the Seres make the dresses are produced from no bark, but in a different way as follows. There is in the land of the Seres an insect which the Greeks call ser, though the Seres themselves give it another name. Its size is twice that of the largest beetle, but in other respects it is like the spiders that spin under trees, and furthermore it has,

3 André and Baslez 1993, 192-198; Casson 1994, 115-127 and 163-218.

4 Pausanias mentions a fellow from Magnesia, Cleon, who went to Gades: 10.4.6-7.

5 Pausanias (1.23.5-6) reproduces the adventures of a Carian in the Atlantic sea.

6 3.12.4. See *infra*.

like the spider, eight feet. These creatures are reared by the Seres, who build them houses adapted for winter and for summer. The product of the creatures, a clue of fine thread, is found rolled round their feet. They keep them for four years, feeding them on millet, but in the fifth year, knowing that they have no longer to live, they give them green reed to eat. This of all foods the creature likes best; so it stuffs itself with the reed till it bursts with surfeit, and after it has thus died they find inside it the greater part of the thread. Seria is known to be an island lying in a recess of the Red Sea. But I have heard that it is not the Red Sea, but a river called Ser, that makes this island, just as in Egypt the Delta is surrounded by the Nile and by no sea. Such another island is Seria said to be. These Seres themselves are of Ethiopian race, as are the inhabitants of the neighboring islands, Abasa and Sacaea. Some say, however, that they are not Ethiopians but a mongrel race of Scythians and Indians. Such are the accounts that are given'. (Transl. Jones 1918, 3.161)

The first section of the text deals with Chinese silk production from the silkworm (σήρ). China became known chiefly through this fabric, but the Greek word for Chinese silk (σηρικὸς)—and then for China (Σήρ, pl. Σήρες)—does not occur until Hellenistic times.⁷ A primitive form of raw silk was already known since the 5th century BCE, but from wild silkworms whose cocoons, being broken by the departing larvae, were harvested from the bark of trees and woven in Cos.⁸ The *Coae vestes* were used by Roman women in the 1st century CE,⁹ but in Augustan times imported Chinese silk garments through Central Asia and India¹⁰ began to replace them.¹¹ Although Tiberius tried to control the use of Chinese silk,¹² it grew in popularity, especially among the emperors;¹³ and

7 There is a mention of it by Nearchos, an officer of Alexander the Great. The text is, however, quoted by Strabo and seems a later addition. See Str. 15.1.20 = *FGrH* 133 (Nearchos) F 19.

8 Arist. *HA* 5.19.551b.13-14. See Richter 1929 and Sherwin-White 1978, 378-383.

9 Tibullus: 2.4.29-30; Propertius: 1.2.2, 2.1.6, 4.2.23, 4.5.23; Horace: *Carm.* 4.13.13, *Sat.* 1.2.101; Ovid: *Ars* 2.298.

10 Silk was sold in the Indian harbour towns of Barbarikon (*PME* 39.13.11), Barygaza (*PME* 49.16.30) and Nelkynda/Muziris (*PME* 56.18.24.) See Casson 1989, 260. India also enjoyed a silk industry of its own. See Gopal 1961. On contacts between China and India, see Liu 1988.

11 The latest reference for the *Coae vestes* is Plin. *Nat.* 11.76-78.

12 Tac. *Ann.* 2.33.1. See also Sen. *Ben.* 7.9.5.

13 As Caligula (Suet. *Cal.* 52.1; D.C. 59.17.3) and *Elagabalus* (*SHA. Heliog.* 26.1).

Chinese people were even included among those who acknowledged Roman superiority through their fabrics sent as presents.¹⁴

However, the origin of this fiber was not well understood; it was even thought to be combed from trees, as Pausanias himself records.¹⁵ He, therefore, tries to unveil the secret of the Chinese silk to a western audience. Yet his account seemed to have little impact, since later sources repeat well worn myths¹⁶ until Justinian's reign (483-565 CE), when silkworms' eggs were smuggled into Constantinople.¹⁷ Pausanias' excursus on Chinese silk is introduced after a reference to the βύσσος, the flax made of the filament of a mollusk, the *Pinna nobilis*.¹⁸ Ancient writers compared the βύσσος with Chinese silk, both very expensive materials,¹⁹ as shown by Diocletian's price edict; the case of the βύσσος being included under the name of 'marine wool'.²⁰ Interestingly, Chinese accounts also compare their domestic silk and the cloths made of βύσσος which Roman traders offered them. Chinese sources say that this fine cloth, different from their own silk, was reportedly made from 'sea-sheep wool' and it was also called 'Egyptian cloth'.²¹

Pausanias seems to have little knowledge of Chinese geography. Actually, direct contacts between China and Rome ('Da Qin' in Chinese sources) were few in number during the Eastern/Western Han periods. Only after defeating the Xiongnu tribes during the 2nd century BCE were the Chinese able to advance towards the West and to establish a tributary system in the Tarim basin.²² The

14 As in Hor. *Carm.* 1.12.52, 3.29.27, 4.15.23. Other mentions of *Seres* and *serica* in Augustan poets: Ov. *Am.* 1.14.5-6; Prop. 1.14.22, 4.8.23. Greco-Roman sources on the Far East: Coedès 2011 and Sheldon 2013.

15 Verg. *G.* 2.121; Plin. *Nat.* 6.54; Sen. *Her. O.* 667.

16 Pollux, *Onom.* 7.76; Amm. Marc. 23.6.67; Eust. *Comment. in Dion. Per. Orb. Descr.* 752.

17 Procop. *Pers.* 8.17.1-8. For silk in Byzantium, see also Pigulewskaia 1969. For the Silk Road in Byzantine times, see Liu 2010, 19-86. A Byzantine commentary (after 552 CE) on Pausanias notes that 'everything concerning the Chinese is wrong, because we know it not by hearsay, but because we have seen it with our own eyes' (ψεύδη τὰ ἐς τοὺς Σήρας ἀπαντα, ἡμεῖς γὰρ οὐκ ἀκοήν ἀλλὰ ὀφθαλμοῖς βλέποντες ἴσμεν τὰ κατ' αὐτοὺς, *Scholium in Pausanias* 6.26.6-9.)

18 5.5.2 (Elis), 6.26.6 (Patras). Pausanias also mentions the βύσσος of the Aetolians (7.21.14), the Hebrews (5.5.2), and the Carpasians (1.26.7). On the βύσσος, see Maeder 2004.

19 Plin. *Nat.* 19.20.

20 ἐρέας θαλασσίας νωτιαίας, *Edictum de Pretiis Maximis* 25.6. See also Str. 15.1.20; Philostr. *VA* 2.20. Heine 1969 and Raschke 1978, 908, n. 1028; Pritchett 1999, 2.117.

21 *Hou Hanshu* 88.12. See Hill 2009, 468-476.

22 The main historical records are the *Shi Ji* (SJ) or 'Historian records' (covering the history of China up to 86 BCE), *Qian Han Shu* (QHS) or 'History of the Former Han Dynasty' (from 210 BCE to 23 CE), *Hou Han Shu* (HHS) or 'History of the Later Han dynasty' (from 23 CE to

Chinese then entered into contact with the Parthian Empire, Rome's greatest rival, which controlled Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.²³ Chinese sources claimed that the Parthians kept the Chinese apart from the Romans, diverting the flow of goods through the Persian Gulf,²⁴ discouraging Chinese missions from traveling west²⁵ and blocking Roman missions eastward.²⁶ The Romans thought that the Chinese avoided contact with them²⁷ and even for the geographer Ptolemy, roughly contemporary to Pausanias, China (Σηρουή) was bounded by the 'Unknown Land'.²⁸

Nevertheless, Pausanias rather refers to the safer and better known maritime route, which connected Roman Egypt with trading posts and traders in Arabia, East Africa and India through the 'Red Sea' (ῥ 'Ερυθρὰ θάλασσα)—our

220 CE) and *Liang Shu* (LS) or 'History of the Liang dynasty' (from 502 CE to 556 CE). On the Chinese tributary system, see Yü 1967. On the rise of the silk trade, see Raschke 1978, 606-622; Liu 2010, 1-14; McLaughlin 2010, 122-140. Chinese sources on Rome: Hirth 1885; Leslie and Gardiner 1996; Hill 2009. See also Graf 1996.

23 ἀγνώστῳ γῆ, Ptol. 6.16.1. The first Westerners were seen in China in 105 BCE, when the Parthians sent to China jugglers from Li Jian (i.e. Seleucid Syria): *SJ* 123 and *QHS* 96 A.27b.

24 'Leaving Sibir [Susa] and traveling south you cross a river, then going southwest, you reach the Kingdom of Yulou [Charax Spasinou] after 960 li [399 km]. This is the extreme western frontier of Anxi [Parthia]. Leaving there, and heading south, you embark on the sea and then reach Da Qin [Roman territory]. In these territories, there are many precious and marvellous things from Haixi ['west of the Sea' = Egypt]' (*HHS* 88.10. Transl. Hill 2009, 23). On Charax Spasinou (with Romans, Parthians and Palmyreans there), see Charlesworth 1961², 60-62 and 66-67; Warmington 1974², 30-31; Ball 2000, 133; Young 2001 129-134; McLaughlin 2010, 95-104. See also Potts 1996 and 1997.

25 'In the ninth Yongyuan [97 BCE], during the reign of Emperor He, the protector General Ban Chao sent Gang Ying to Da Qin [the Roman Empire]. He reached Tiaozi [Characene and Susiana] next to a large sea. He wanted to cross it, but the sailors of the western frontier of Anxi [Parthia] said to him: 'The Ocean is huge; those making the round trip can do it in three months if the winds are favorable. However, if you encounter winds that delay you, it can take two years. That is why all the men who go by sea take stores for three years. The vast ocean urges men to think of their country, and get homesick, and some of them die'. When [Gan] Ying heard this, he discontinued his trip' (*HHS* 88.10. Transl. Hill 2009, 23).

26 'The king of this country always wanted to send envoys to Han, but Anxi [Parthia], wishing to control the trade in multicoloured Chinese silks, blocked the route to prevent [the Romans] getting through [to China]' (*HHS* 88.12. Transl. Hill. 2009, 27).

27 Plin. *Nat.* 6.20; Amm. Marc. 23.6.68.

28 See Berggren and Jones 2000, 23-30 and 150-152. On this overland route, see Wheeler 1954, 183-202; Charlesworth 1961², 98-111; Warmington 1974², 18-34; Raschke 1978, 637-645 and 1978b; Ball 2000, 402-403; Young 2001, 169-180; Choiseul 2004, 55-65, 81-82 and 147-161; McLaughlin 2010, 83-109, Sheldon 2010, 186-211.

Red Sea, plus the Gulf of Aden and the western Indian Ocean.²⁹ It was already a prominent trade route in the time of the Ptolemies,³⁰ but was further used after Augustus' conquest of Egypt. Furthermore, the subsequent discovery of the monsoon winds, which greatly increased the speed of trading vessels, led to a flourishing of waterborne trade between Rome and India.³¹

Still trade intermediaries had a prominent role in Rome's eastern trade: the Palmyrenes, for example, kept outposts at every likely entrepôt of the silk trade (even at Ostia, the port of Rome), being involved in seaborne commerce in the Persian Gulf, in addition to the camel caravan routes in Central Asia.³² Thus, the vague knowledge that the Chinese and the Romans had of each other³³ derived primarily from these above-mentioned trade ventures with merchants of Levantine or eastern origin: they occasionally left some type of written record,³⁴ such as the geographer Isidore of Charax Spasinou (1st century CE)³⁵ or the Syrian merchant Maes Titianus (early 2nd century CE)³⁶ for the overland routes; or the anonymous sailor of Egyptian origin who authored the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (*PME*) in the 1st century CE, for the maritime routes.³⁷ Still ancient scholars, such as Ptolemy, complained that merchants were

29 See Sidebotham 1986, 182-185 and Wiesehöfer 1998, 10-36.

30 The expedition of Eudoxus of Cyzicus in 116 BCE guided by the sea-captain Hippalus: *PME* 57.19.2-7; Plin. *Nat.* 6.23, 26; Str. 2.3.4-5. See Wheeler 1954, 153-157; Casson 1989, 224 and 283-293; Tchernia 2011, 289-301; Sidebotham 2011, 32-54.

31 On this maritime route, see Wheeler 1954, 141-182 and 203-207; Charlesworth 1961², 16-73; Miller 1969, 119-152; Warmington 1974², 6-16 and 35-83; Raschke 1978, 650-676; Ferguson 1978, 585-591; Poinssotte 1979, 443-452; Young 2001, 24-80; Ball 2000, 123-139; Parker 2002, 61-72; Whittaker 2004, 163-180; Choissnel 2004, 100-103, 122-125 and 129-143; Blue 2009, Liu 2010, 19-41; McLaughlin 2010; Sidebotham 2011, 175-194.

32 On Palmyrene merchants specifically, see Teixedor 1984, 15-55; Starcky and Gawlikowsky 1985, 74-81; Will 1992, 64-81; Yon 2000, 99-130 (Chapter 3: *les activités des notables*), 263-264 (Appendix XI: *texts caravaniers honorifiques*), 270-274 (Appendix XIII: *Palmyréniens à l'étranger*); Delplace and Yon 171-185 (Inscriptions of the Agora n° VI.01-19), 244-254 (Inscriptions n° 24-40), 215-220 (Commentary). For silk fragments found at Palmyra, see Schmidt-Colinet, Stauffer and Al-As'ad 2000. Further on Palmyra, see *infra* n. 73.

33 On the prejudices of Roman-Chinese relations, see also Ferguson 1978; Poinssotte 1979 (Greco-Roman sources); Graf 1996 (Chinese sources).

34 Lists of stages (*tabellaria*) or itineraries (*itineraria*). See Whittaker 2004, 63-87 and specially, Brodersen 2007 and Salway 2007.

35 Isidorus: Chaumont 1984. The Στάθμοι Παρθίων: Schoff 1976² and Belfiore 2004, 245-266.

36 Maes Titianus: Cary 1956 and Bernard 2005.

37 See Casson 1989, 7-10 and 31-34; Belfiori 2004, 77-83; Marcotte 2013, 13-16; Arnaud 2013, 30-43. The *PME*: Casson 1989 and Belfiori 2004.

ill-prepared to describe what they had seen,³⁸ even accusing them of inventing tales for the purpose of enhancing the price of their imports.³⁹ In any case, such merchants were naturally concerned with the products with which they traded rather than with the geography of the lands from which such goods came. That would explain why Pausanias' information about *Seria* (ἡ Σηρία) and the River *Sera* (Σήρ) throws little light upon actual China in contrast to his detailed description of the silkworm.

In fact, it is very unlikely that Pausanias himself had ever met a Chinese person (although easterners are attested as household servants in Italy).⁴⁰ Most Romans did not even have a clear idea of the exact location of China or the external appearance of the Chinese: Pausanias records that the Chinese were believed to be of Ethiopian race and some Roman writers actually placed them at the sources of the Nile.⁴¹ Pausanias also adds that the Chinese live on the Ethiopian coast in a recess of the Red Sea, on an island (ἡ Σηρία νῆσος) next to the islands of Abasa (Ἄβασα) and Sacaea (Σαχαιά) (6.26.9); a reference that can be explained with the mention in the *PME* and Pliny the Elder of a town called *Sace*, also on the Red Sea.⁴² But, on the other hand, Pausanias also mentions that the Chinese were also considered a mixed Scythian and Indian race—in fact, other ancient texts describe the Chinese as having blue eyes and red hair—probably referring to merchants from China who were not Han, but Tocharians ('Yuezhi') coming to India via the Tibetan plateau and Xinjiang.⁴³

Apparently, the only actual contact between 'Roman envoys' and China was in 166 CE, after the successful campaigns against the Parthians (161-165 CE) led by Lucius Verus, Marcus Aurelius' colleague in power, when Rome controlled the Persian Gulf.⁴⁴ A group of pioneers reached then the Chinese court

38 Str. 15.1.2; Ptol. 1.11.7-8.

39 Plin. *Nat.* 12.42.

40 Favorinus bequeathed his Indian servant, along with his house in Rome, to Herodes Atticus: Philostr. *vs.* 1.8.491. At Vagnari, an imperial estate in southern Italy, DNA testing revealed the unique case of a grave that belonged to a female person of Eastern-Asian ancestry. See Prowse e.a. 2010, 186-187 and 189-191. There is a dubious reference in Florus (2.34.62) to a Chinese embassy to Augustus. Warmington 1974², 37 and 157-158 suggested that they were the Tamil '*Cheras*'.

41 Luc. 10.291-292.

42 ἡ Ἀδουλι, κειμένον ἐν κόλπῳ βαθεῖ (*PME* 4.1.20-21). *Oppidum Sace... oppidum Aduliton* (Plin. *Nat.* 6.52). See Casson 1984, 199-210 and 1989, 102-106.

43 Plin. *Nat.* 6.23. See Lieberman 1957 and Sergents 1998. For Europoid burials in Xinjiang, see Mallory and Mair 2000.

44 On Roman military policies in the Eastern frontiers, see Isaac 1990, 19-53; Ball 2000, 8-22 and 106-123; Whittaker 2004, 28-49; McLaughlin 2010, 97-102 and Sheldon 2010.

introducing themselves as ambassadors of the emperor Marcus Aurelius. This event was recorded in the *Hou Han Shu* (*HHS*):

In the ninth Yanxi year [166 CE] during the reign of Emperor Huan, the king of Da Qin [the Roman Emperor] Andun [Marcus Aurelius Antoninus] sent envoys from the frontiers through Rinan [Commandery of the central Vietnamese coast] to offer elephant tusk, rhinoceros horn, and turtle shell. This was the very first time there was [direct] communication [between the two countries]. The tribute brought was neither precious nor rare, therefore raising suspicions that the accounts [of Da Qin] might have been exaggerated. (*HHS* 88.12; transl. Hill 2009, 27)

However, the Chinese themselves viewed these 'official representatives' with suspicion: they may have been a private commercial enterprise of eastern origin who simply might have procured their merchandise during their voyage from Arabia and India. Furthermore, these people were said to come by way of Vietnam.⁴⁵ This fact is significant: at the beginning of the 1st century CE few sailors had ventured farther east than the mouth of the Ganges River,⁴⁶ but in Claudian times a Roman trade agent was blown off course on his voyage and sought refuge in Sri Lanka.⁴⁷ By the end of the 1st century CE trade contacts had expanded and reports arrived of even more distant territories: Ptolemy describes the Golden Chersonese (the Malay peninsula)⁴⁸ and used details from an account written by a Greek speaking sailor/merchant (of arguably eastern origin) named Alexander⁴⁹ to describe the port of Cattigara (Borneo).⁵⁰

45 'During the second and the fourth Yanxi years in the reign of Emperor Huan [159 and 161 CE], and frequently since, [these] foreigners have arrived [by sea] at the frontiers of Rinan [Commandery of the central Vietnamese coast] to present offerings'. (*HHS* 88.15. Transl. Hill 2009, 31.) See Hirth 1885, 47; 82; 94-95 and 173; Leslie and Gardiner 1996, 153-158; Hill 2009, 481-483.

46 Str. 15.1.4. A similar indication in the *PME* (64.21.15-16) preludes a hearsay description.

47 Plin. *Nat.* 6.23. Coinage of the Antonines in Sri-Lanka: Weerakkody 1997, 157-170.

48 Golden (Chryse) peninsula: Ptol. 7.1.15, 7.2.5, 12, 15, 17. Also Plin. *Nat.* 6.20.

49 Alexander and the route to Southeast Asia: Ptol. 1.14. See Berggren and Jones 2000, 26-27, 74-75.

50 Cattigara: Ptol. 1.11.1, 14.4, 23, 7.3.3. On the identification of Cattigara and the Golden Chersonese see also Raschke 1978, 1047; Casson 1989, 235-236; Glover 1996; Young 2001, 28-30; Tomber 2008, 144-147; McLaughlin 2010, 117-120; Tchernia 2011, 62-64.

Traders then began venturing into Vietnam,⁵¹ some of whom would have been interested in making new trade contacts in neighboring China.⁵²

A connection between Pausanias' excursus on China (securely dated after 174 CE)⁵³ and the Chinese chronicles has been long acknowledged.⁵⁴ We may interpret this connection within a context where merchants in Arabia, India, and Central Asia would have been presumably sharing knowledge of their travels to the Far East with their peers coming from the West and then, the latter with scholars, such as Ptolemy. Likewise, Pausanias' description of China and the Chinese silk might also derive from such type of oral reports (ἤκουσα δὲ καὶ ὥς...οἱ δὲ...φασὶν...).

2 Pausanias and Trade Routes and Traders Through Egypt, Ethiopia, Arabia and the Far East

For Pausanias, as for many of his contemporaries, the Far East represented an appealing land of exotic mysteries:

δοκῶ δέ, εἰ καὶ Λιβύης τις ἢ τῆς Ἰνδῶν ἢ Ἀράβων γῆς ἐπέρχοιτο τὰ ἔσχατα ἐθέλων θηρία ὅποσα παρ' Ἑλλήσιν ἐξευρεῖν, τὰ μὲν οὐδὲ ἀρχὴν αὐτὸν εὐρήσειν, τὰ δὲ οὐ κατὰ ταῦτ' ἔχειν φανείσθαι οἱ. (9.21.5)

If one were to traverse the most remote parts of Libya, India or Arabia, in search of such beasts as are found in Greece, some he would not discover at all, and others would have a different appearance. (Transl. Jones 1918, 4.263)

Popular literary genres, such as the pantomime and the ancient Greek novel, presented a stereotyped image of the Far East as a world of Indian merchant-princes, fabulous armies and hopeless heroes in fabulous lands.⁵⁵ Pantomime

51 A Roman medallion of Antoninus Pius was found at Oc-Eo: Ray 1994, 212.

52 Jugglers from *Da Qin* came with an embassy from Shan (Burmese border) to China in 120 CE: *HHS* 86. Roman merchants from Cambodia and Vietnam in 266 CE: *LS* 54. 22 a-b.

53 See reference in 5.1.2.

54 This connection was already noted by Frazer 1898, 6.110-112. See further discussion in Wheeler 1954, 203-207; Charlesworth 1961², 107-111; Ferguson 1978, 594; Young 2001, 29; McLaughlin 2010, 131-135; Sidebotham 2011, 253-254.

55 Xenophon of Ephesus mentions an Indian rajah doing business in Egypt: *X.Eph.* 3.11.2. Indians and Chinese also appear in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*: *Hld.* 9.16-18. In a Late Roman mime, preserved on a papyrus from the 2nd century CE, the hero of the play travels to

plays were especially fashionable spectacles in the East: they enjoyed the patronage of emperors,⁵⁶ performers adorned themselves with costly silk vestments,⁵⁷ and plays were sometimes set in the Far East with characters speaking exotic languages.⁵⁸

But Pausanias could have also obtained his information either from accounts of other fellow Greek sophists traveling to the East or even directly from eastern people who visited famous shrines such as Olympia,⁵⁹ or cosmopolitan cities such as Alexandria (Egypt).⁶⁰ In fact, much of Pausanias' writing is sprinkled with references to temple guides⁶¹ and travelers in Greece.⁶² But Pausanias also records the testimony of merchants, not only of those sailing to Italy,⁶³ but also of 'those sailing to India' (οἱ δὲ ἐς τὴν Ἰνδικὴν ἐσπλέοντες):

οἱ δὲ ἐς τὴν Ἰνδικὴν ἐσπλέοντες φορτίων φασὶν Ἑλληνικῶν τοὺς Ἰνδοὺς ἀγώγιμα ἄλλα ἀνταλλάσσεσθαι, νόμισμα δὲ οὐκ ἐπίστασθαι, καὶ ταῦτα χρυσοῦ τε ἀφθόνου καὶ χαλκοῦ παρόντος σφίσι. (3.12.4)

Those who sail to India say that the natives give other merchandise in exchange for Greek cargoes knowing nothing about coinage, and that though they have plenty of gold and of bronze. (Transl. Jones 1918, 2.73)

Pausanias' reference has a parallel in similar allusions in Ptolemy's *Geography* to 'those sailing there' (πλέοντες/ἐσπλέοντες) or 'sailing through' (διαπλέοντες) these exotic lands who occasionally acted as his informants.⁶⁴ It was not uncommon for sophists to have shippers and merchants among their clients

India aboard a Roman ship to rescue his sister: *POxy.* 3.413. See Santelia 1991 and Andreassi 2001.

56 SHA, *Verus* 8.11.

57 ἐσθῆτι σηρικῇ (Luc. *Salt.* 63).

58 The abovementioned mime (*POxy.* 3.413) contains lines belonging to Indian characters in a Dravidian language. See Santelia 1991, 65-74 and Andreassi 2001, 56-58.

59 Plutarch describes a debate at Delphi between some learned visitors and a Spartan called Cleombrotus who had sailed beyond the Red Sea: Plut. *De Defect.* 410a.

60 Dio Chrysostom mentions Bactrians, Scythians, Persians and a few Indians, all making up his audience in the theatre of Alexandria: D.Chr. 32.40.

61 On Pausanias' guides, see De Angelis 1998, Jones 2001, Pretzler 2004.

62 Pausanias mentions in Greece his quarrel with a man from Sidon about Asclepius: 7.23.7-8. See Habicht 1985, 158-159.

63 For trade purposes: καὶ ἐς ἐμὲ ἀνδρὸς ἤκουσα πλεύσαντος κατὰ ἐμπορίαν... (6.6.10).

64 Διογένη μὲν τινὰ φησι τῶν Ἰνδικῶν πλεόντων ὑποστρέφοντα τὸ δεύτερον... Θεόφιλον δὲ τινὰ τῶν εἰς τὴν Ἀζανίαν πλεόντων (Ptol. 1.9.1); πάντες γὰρ ἡμῖν ἀπαξαπλῶς ὁμολογῶσιν οἱ τοὺς

and/or to be involved in trade.⁶⁵ Pausanias, in fact, also knew a great deal about these merchants' world and, specifically, about the products they imported, such as tortoise-shell (Paus. 8.23.9), ivory (5.12.3),⁶⁶ parrots (2.28.1), rhinoceros, camels (9.21.2-4), 'Stymphalian' birds (8.22.4-6) or winged scorpions (9.21.6); even providing an in-depth description of an Indian tiger (9.21.4-5) after a close examination of a captive specimen.⁶⁷ Pausanias also mentions the Brahmins (4.32.4), whose journey to Rome had attracted scholarly attention since the 1st century CE.⁶⁸ Thus Pausanias' knowledge of distant lands also stems from oral reports of travelers in Asia and from the products which they returned with to Rome.⁶⁹

But who were these 'Greek merchants' who filled the Roman markets with such exotic goods and how did they get them? Indian sources called them *Yavana* ('Ionians')⁷⁰, but they were actually Greek-speaking Levantines—as we have already indicated *supra*—who operated from Antioch (Syria) and

τόπους διαπλέοντες (Ptol. 1.17.3); ὁμολογείται...παρά τε τῶν ἐντεύθεν εἰσπλευσάντων καὶ χρόνον πλείστον ἐπελθόντων τοὺς τόπους (Ptol. 1.17.4).

- 65 The sophist Damianus had a private harbour for the use of merchant-vessels: Philostr. vs 2.23.606. The wealthy father of a sophist owned slaves earning their livelihood from the sea: Philostr. vs 1.24.528. The sophist Proclus made a fortune in Alexandrian commerce, establishing his own academy at Athens with the profits: Philostr. vs 2.21.603. The father of a student was a sea captain who dealt with Indians: Philostr. VA 3.35. See Pleket 1983 and D'Arms 1981, 72-171.
- 66 See 1.12.4 and 5.12.3-4 (an elephant's skull in Campania).
- 67 Exotic beasts were first exhibited by Augustus: Suet. *Aug.* 43.4. The so-called 'Alexandrian Tariff' mentions the eastern traffic in lions, leopards and panthers: Justinian, *Digest.* 39.4.16.7. For exotic beasts and spices, see also Miller 1969, 34-118; Warmington 1974², 145-260; Raschke 1978, 650-676; Casson 1989, 15-21 and 35-43; Dalby 2000, 178-200; Young 2001, 198-201; Parker 2002, 41-55; Parker 2008, 147-165; McLaughlin 2010, 141-155 and Sidebotham 2011, 221-253 (in Berenike).
- 68 An Indian Brahmin burned himself on a pyre in Athens in the presence of Augustus and Livia: Str. 15.1.73; Florus, *Epit.* 2.32.12.4; D.C. 54.9.10. Lucian mentions a student who went to India to visit the Brahmins: Luc. *Tox.* 33-34.
- 69 Even Arrian, whose *Indika* was based on Hellenistic works, included comments on elephants (*Ind.* 14.5-6), parrots, apes (*Ind.* 15.9), and pearls (*Ind.* 8.8-9), as common sights in Roman markets.
- 70 On the etymology of *Yavana*, see Narain 1957, 165-169. On the *Yavana* population in India, see mainly Ray 1988, 1993 and 1995; but also Wheeler 1954, 158-163; Charlesworth 1961², 69-73; Warmington 1974², 60-68, 112 and 261-262; Casson 1989, 21-27 and 294-309; Belfiore 2004, 47-49; Tomber 2008, 26-28; McLaughlin 2010, 18-20 and 47-56; Fauconnier 2012, 94-101.

Alexandria, trading hubs of the eastern Mediterranean Sea⁷¹ and gateways to the Far East;⁷² or from Petra and Palmyra, on caravan routes bound for the ports of Syria-Palestina.⁷³ Also in Phoenicia, Tyre and Sidon had important trade and manufacturing centres where imported Chinese silks were dyed: as Pausanias reports (3.21.6), the best shell for the manufacture of purple dye was found there.⁷⁴

Like many well-educated men of his era, Pausanias went to Egypt and navigated the Nile,⁷⁵ visiting sites such as the famous 'statue of Memnon'.⁷⁶ But in addition to being a tourist destination, the Nile was the route through which goods were imported from the Mediterranean basin to the Red Sea and vice versa. Coptus, on the most eastward bend of the Nile and connected by a land route to the Red Sea ports, served as the entrepôt for such trade.⁷⁷ Pausanias

71 For Antioch's trade prosperity, see Charlesworth 1961², 46-47; Downey 1961, 15-23 and 163-269; Liebeschuetz 1972, 73-83 and 163-229; Lassus 1977, 79-87; Ball 2000, 150-155; Young 2001, 169-180; McLaughlin 2010, 92 and 102. See also Kondoleon 2000 and Saliou 2004. For contacts with Arabia and India from Alexandria, see Charlesworth 1961², 27-31; Casson 1987, 35-39; Ball 2000, 150-156; Young 2001, 51-52; McLaughlin 2010, 23-24. See also Huzar 1988, 366-379 and 1988b, 646-656.

72 Ambassadors from India at Antioch: Str. 15.1.73; D.C. 54.9.8-10. Indians at Alexandria: D.Chr. 32.40 and X.Eph. 3.11.2. Berenike on the Red Sea coast has also produced texts in Tamil and south Indian domestic pottery. See Sidebotham 2011, 75 and 222-223. For the impact of Indian products and Indian people in the Roman world, see Casson 1989, 37-38; Ball 2000, 399-403; Whittaker 2004, 144-162; McLaughlin 2010, 111-117; and specifically, Parker 2002, 2004 and 2008 (especially 207-250).

73 For the progressive expansion of Rome in Arabia *Petraea* and for the capital role of middlemen from Petra and Palmyra, see Wheeler 1954, 138-140; Charlesworth 1961², 48-49 and 53-54; Warmington 1974², 97-105; Isaac 1990, 118-156; Ball 2000, 60-87 and 397-398; Young 2001, 81-168 and 202-216; McLaughlin 2010, 61-81, 95-97 and 104-146; Sidebotham 2011, 209-212. See also, in general, Bowersock 1983; Desanges 1989 and Edwell, 2008.

74 Pausanias (5.12.4) saw in Olympia a woollen curtain with Assyrian weaving and Phoenician purple. See Charlesworth 1961², 51-56; Warmington 1974², 271; Ball 2000, 174-175; Young 2001, 174 and 187; McLaughlin 2010, 93; but for Berytus (Late Antiquity) see also Hall 2004, 24-28 and 224-236.

75 Egypt as a tourist destination: Foertmeyer 1989 and Adams 2007b, but also André-Baslez 1993, 192-198; Casson 1994², 115-127 and 163-218.

76 Paus. 1.42.3. See Str. 17.1.46; Philostr. *VA* 6.4 and inscriptions in Bernard 1960.

77 For the trade routes between Lower Egypt and the Red Sea and the central role of Coptus in this transport network, see specifically Cuvigny 2000; Brun 2002; Grzybeck 2002; Jackson 2002, 3-107. See also Charlesworth 1961², 19-24; Sidebotham 1986, 54-67 and 83-92; 1991; 1996, 287-295; 2005; 2011, 125-174; Casson 1989, 13-14 and 14, n. 11 (bibliography and sources); Young 2001, 25-80; Adams 2007b, 17-46 and 220-253; Tomber 2008, 57-67; McLaughlin 2010, 23-33.

actually mentions Coptus once, as he relates the story of a man who died during the Isis festival in Coptus, in parallel to a similar incident at an Isis festival celebrated in Tithorea:

ἐοικότα δὲ ἀνδρὸς ἤκουσα Φοίνικος, ἄγειν τῇ Ἰσιδι Αἰγυπτίους τὴν ἑορτήν, ὅτε αὐτὴν τὸν Ὅσιριν πενθεῖν λέγουσι· τῆνικαὐτά δὲ καὶ ὁ Νεῖλος ἀναβαίνειν σφίσις ἄρχεται, καὶ τῶν ἐπιχωρίων πολλοῖς ἐστὶν εἰρημένα ὥς τὰ αὖξοντα τὸν ποταμὸν καὶ ἄρδειν τὰς ἀρούρας ποιοῦντα δάκρυά ἐστι τῆς Ἰσιδος. τότε οὖν τὸν Ῥωμαῖον, ὃς ἐπετέτραπτο Αἰγυπτὸν, ἀνδρὰ ξφῆ χρήμασιν ἀναπείσαντα ἐς τὸ ἄδυτον καταπέμψαι τῆς Ἰσιδος τὸ ἐν Κόπτῳ· καὶ ὁ ἐσπεμφθεὶς ἀνέστρεψε μὲν ἐκ τοῦ ἀδύτου, διηγησάμενον δὲ ὅποσα ἐθεάσατο καὶ τοῦτον αὐτίκα ἐπυνθανόμην τελευτήσαι. (10.32.18)

I have heard a similar story from a man of Phoenicia that the Egyptians hold the feast for Isis at a time when they say she is mourning for Osiris. At this time the Nile begins to rise, and it is a saying among many of the natives that what makes the river rise and water their fields are the tears of Isis. At that time then the Roman governor of Egypt bribed a man to go down into the shrine of Isis in Coptus. The man dispatched into the shrine returned indeed out of it, but after relating what he had seen, he too, so I was told, died immediately. (Transl. Jones 1918, 4565)

We can't say for certain whether Pausanias visited Coptus or encountered elsewhere the Phoenician man who served as the source of his story (ἤκουσα... ξφῆ... διηγησάμενον, 10.32.18). However, his account conforms to what we know about Coptus in Roman times: archaeology has revealed a temple complex dedicated to Isis at Coptus⁷⁸ and the unknown Roman governor who ordered the man to enter the Isis temple⁷⁹ probably was the Roman prefect visiting Coptus during his annual provincial tour, as the city was the main *conventus* center in Upper Egypt.⁸⁰ But, most importantly, the man from Phoenicia

78 Κοπτός/Κόπτος from κόπτειν ('to cut off'): Plu. *De Iside et Osiride* 14 (*Mor.* 356d). Isis' lock in Coptus as a touristic sight: *Scholium ad Lucian. Philopseudes* 33. ed. Rabe 1906 = *EM* s.v. Κοπτός. See also Aelian, *NA* 10.23. People admiring the lock during their visit: Bernard 1984, n° 71 and *P.Mich.* n° 4683. See Fournet 2002 and, in general, Traunecker 1992; Gabolde 2000.

79 τότε οὖν τὸν Ῥωμαῖον, ὃς ἐπετέτραπτο Αἰγυπτὸν (Paus. 10.32.18; ἐπιτρέπομαι = *praefectus esse*). For a similar phrasing, see Philo, *Flacc.* 1.2 and 19.158. ἐπίτροπος is the common Greek translation for the Latin *praefectus* and *procurator*. See Mason 1974, 48 and 142-143.

80 On proconsular visits to Coptus, see Haensch 1997.

probably was a trader who came to Coptus during the Isis fair: first, this story is related to a similar one which Pausanias was told at the Isis festival of Tithorea (10.32.14-16), where he mentions merchants selling their products; and secondly, ancient texts and inscriptions reveal that people from diverse ethnic origins traded in Coptus⁸¹ and that Phoenician products (especially wine and purple fabrics) were sold and exported from there to India.⁸² In fact, the region was a militarized zone with forts and troops safeguarding caravan trains bringing in and exporting trade goods.⁸³

In contrast with Lower Egypt, Pausanias would have only briefly visited Upper Egypt. It is obvious that he primarily relies on written sources—such as Herodotus and ‘those who profess to know the measurements of the earth’ (οἱ δὲ μέτρα φάμενοι γῆς, 1.33.5)—to distinguish between the *Ichthyophagoi* (fish-eaters) of the Red Sea coast, the Ethiopians of Meroe, and the inhabitants of Central Africa. But Pausanias also refers to ‘those Greek and Egyptian travelers beyond Syene to the city of Meroe of the Ethiopians’ (ὅσοι δὲ Ἑλλήνων ἢ Αἰγυπτίων ἐς Αἰθιοπίαν τὴν ὑπὲρ Συήνης καὶ ἐς Μερὸν Αἰθίοπων πόλιν ἀναβέβηκασι, 5.7.4). These travelers likely informed him about the course of the Nile after the first cataract.⁸⁴ Pausanias actually learnt (ἤκουσα... ἔφη) ‘from a man of Cyprus expert in sorting herbs for medicinal purposes’ (ἄνδρὸς Κυπρίου διακρίναι πόας ἐς ἀνθρώπων ἴασιν εἰδότος, 1.42.5) some particulars on ebony production in Ethiopia. This Cypriot probably was a merchant distributing in the Mediterranean basin perfumes such as frankincense and myrrh, which came mostly from Arabia.⁸⁵ According to Pausanias (9.28.3-4), Arabians extracted balsam from trees infested by serpents because they had long since built up immunities to the poison.⁸⁶

81 Coptus was a common emporium shared by Egyptians and Arabs: Str. 17.1.44-45 (See also Plin. *Nat.* 5.60; Ael. Arist. 36.115; X.Eph. 4.1.4-5). It was still important in the 4th century CE: Amm.Marc. 22.16.2. See Rathbone 2002.

82 Laodicea supplied Alexandria with wine (Str. 16.2.9), ostraca (O.Petr. 241, 289, 290) record shipments of this wine from Alexandria to Coptus and, according to the *PME* (6.2.32-33, 49.16.25-31), it was exported to Africa and India. See Casson 1989, 113.

83 On military presence in Coptus, see Alston 1995, 13-38 and 79-86; Reddé 2002.

84 *Ichthyophagi* (Diod. 3.15-20) are mentioned along with the *Agriophagi* (wild animal eaters) and the *Moschophagi* (shoots and stalks eaters) in the *PME* (2.1.7-10.) See Wheeler 1954, 138-140; Charlesworth 1961², 33-34 and 64-67; Casson 1989, 97-115; Jackson 2002, 109-155.

85 Str. 16.4.19; Diod. 3.46.2; Plin. *Nat.* 12.54. See Millet 1969, 101-105; Casson 1984, 225-246 and 1989, 122-126; Young 2001, 81-122; McLaughlin 2010, 61-81; but also Groom 1981 and De Romanis 1996.

86 See also Plin. *Nat.* 8.93.

Pausanias' knowledge of India is limited to the northwestern region: he only mentions the Indus (4.34.2-3) and its crocodiles and serpents—described in a similar way as in the *PME*⁸⁷—, but not the Ganges. Pausanias also noted the absence of coinage in India (3.12.4, see *supra*), contradicting other sources that claimed that the eastern trade withdrew from Rome one hundred million of sesterces every year.⁸⁸ It is possible that Pausanias' conclusion was dependent on the testimony of merchants and/or other non-commercial travelers who would have journeyed exclusively to northwest India, an area where discoveries of Roman gold and silver coins are limited in number despite its thriving trade with the Roman Empire.⁸⁹ The *PME* reports, in fact, that Greco-Bactrian coins were still circulating in Barygaza (Brouh), well after the collapse in the late 2nd century BCE of this kingdom.⁹⁰ Greco-Bactrian coins, however, did not seem to have reached the Tamil lands and the *PME* advises travelers to have Roman money, gold and silver, when traveling to North India 'as it commands an exchange at some profit against the local currency';⁹¹ but it was mainly the Roman standard during the Julio-Claudian era which was accepted.⁹² Southern

87 The *PME* reports snakes (eels) not only off the Indus Delta (38.12.28-29), but also off the Gulf of Cambay (40.13.31-32) and the Malabar Coast (55.18.12-15). The snakes from the Gulf of Kutch (40.13.30) are said to be huge and black, which agrees with Pausanias's description (4.34.2). The snakes are called γράται (38.12.29), from the Sanskrit *grāha*, used for large marine animals such as the crocodile. See Casson 1989, 187-188.

88 Plin. *Nat.* 12.41 and also Tac. *Ann.* 3.53; D.C. 52.15. See Raschke 1978, 622-637; Veyne 1979; Dalby 2000, 178-200; Young 2001, 181-191; Parker 2002, 55-61; Parker 2008, 165-171; McLaughlin 2010, 141-155; Tchernia 2011, 301-303. Asian people also viewed western foreigners through the lens of commodities: a Tamil poem describes Muziris as 'the city where the beautiful vessels, the masterpieces of the Yavanas stir white foam on the Periyar, river of Kerala, arriving with gold and departing with pepper' (quotation drawn from Casson 1989, 296). On these Tamil texts, see also Meile 1940; Zvelebil 1956 and especially Selby 2008.

89 Northwest India was the 'Kingdom of Tianzhu' in Chinese sources: 'This region produces elephants, rhinoceros, and turtle shell, gold, silver, copper, iron, lead and tin. To the West, it communicates with Da Qin [the Roman Empire]. Precious things from Da Qin can be found there, as well as fine cotton cloths, fine wool carpets, perfumes of all sorts, sugar candy, pepper, ginger and black salt' (*HHS* 88.15. Transl. Hill 2009, 31.)

90 *PME* 47.16.9-11. Silk clothes imported via Bactria were also found at Barygaza: *PME* 64.21.12-14 (see also 41.14.7-8). For the Greco-Bactrian kingdom, see Narain 1957; Turn 1984; Holt 1999.

91 ἔχον ἀλλαγὴν καὶ ἐπικέρδειάν τινα πρὸς τὸ ἐντόπιον νόμισμα (*PME* 49.16.23-25.)

92 By the Tamil kings in the south: Plin. *Nat.* 6.85; Solin. 53.9-10. The *PME* recommends bringing to Muziris/Nelkynda a great amount of money (56.18.18), but not so much to Barbarikon (39.13.9) in North India. Wheeler 1955, 164-170 thought that silver and gold coins were used there as bullion. For a discussion on coinage in India (challenging Wheeler's vision), see

India, in fact, seems to have had more ports with more thriving trade settlements, such as Muziris and Arikamedu,⁹³ although much of the subcontinent remained beyond the reach of Roman subjects.

By Pausanias' era trade and cultural contacts in the Far East had yielded new information about the cultures of Asia to the Romans, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Probably drawing from the reports of sailors returning from Southeast Asia—for instance, Strabo knew that products from Sri Lanka were sold in Indian markets⁹⁴—, Pausanias mentions in his excursus on China that he has heard (ἤκουσα) of a river called Ser which 'makes this island (China), just as in Egypt the Delta is surrounded by the Nile and by no sea'.⁹⁵ Pausanias' account and a similar one written by Ptolemy about the Seros river are likely to be vague descriptions of the Chao Phraya, the largest river in Thailand, which with its many tributaries is actually comparable to the Nile.⁹⁶

3 Conclusion

Traders and manufacturers informed Pausanias of the origin of Chinese silk and of China, providing new information in opposition to the established knowledge of contemporary geographers. These accounts from traders are not isolated when placed in the context of the *Description of Greece*. We have studied this passage in comparison with other references to trade and traders to the Far East, following an itinerary from the Mediterranean basin to the Far East, which matches well with Pausanias' description of such trade. As we have

especially Turner 1989 and also Miller 1969, 216-241; Sidebotham 1986, 27-33; Casson 1989, 29-31; Ball 2000, 127-129; Tomber 2008, 30-38; Tchernia 2011, 304-314.

93 The town of Muziris has been recently identified with Pattanam. See Parker 2008, 171-183; Tomber 2008, 140-144 and Selvakumar 2009. Muziris had a temple of Augustus: *Tabula Peutingeriana* Section 5 of segment 11. An Egyptian papyrus records shipments of goods from Egypt to Muziris: Casson 1986; Rathbone 2001. The best known port is Arikamedu (*Poduké* in *PME* 60.20.6), discovered in the 60s, but the Roman presence there has been challenged in recent years. See Wheeler 1954, 173-179; Begley 1987 and 1996; Comfort 1991; Will 1991; Sidebotham 1996, 295-300; Ball 2000, 127-129; Tomber 2008, 132-138. On archaeological discoveries in India, see Deo 1991 and Raman 1991.

94 Str. 2.1.14.

95 οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ποιῶν νήσον αὐτήν, ὥσπερ καὶ Αἰγύπτου τὸ Δέλτα ὑπὸ τοῦ Νεῖλου καὶ οὐχ ὑπὸ μιᾶς περιέχεσθαι θαλάσσης, Paus. 6.26.9.

96 River Seros: Ptol. 7.2.7. See Hermann s.v. 'Seros' in *RE* II.A.2 (1923), 1727. For the Nile and the Delta described as an island see also Plin. *Nat.* 5.48 and Str. 1.2.25.

seen, Chinese silk arrived through India, in addition to ivory, ebony, medicinal plants, spices and perfumes.

Many of these products are mentioned in the *Description of Greece* and it was through the testimony of merchants and sellers that he gleaned much of his information about the world beyond Rome's borders. He could have met traders in Rome, a city where he would have seen on display exotic animals. But also, as we have seen, Pausanias may have obtained reports from traders either based in Egypt or Syria-Palestine or traveling there from his native Asia Minor: for example, in his long excursus about exotic animals (9.21), which includes Indian 'martichoras' (tigers), he also mentions a winged scorpion brought to Ionia from Egypt by a Phrygian man (9.21.6).

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